

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3897

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT UR

SUBJ: ROY MEDVEDEV: REPORT OF POLITBURO FRICTION; PARTY
CONGRESS THIS YEAR

REF: MOSCOW 1038

1. POLITICAL COUNSELOR ATTENDED ANOTHER DINNER AT
THE HOME OF LOCAL NORWEGIAN CORRESPONDENT MARCH 19
AT WHICH ROY MEDVEDEV, THE WELL-KNOWN DISSIDENT, WAS
THE STAR ATTRACTION. ALSO PRESENT WERE ONE SCADINAVIAN
DIPLOMAT, AND THREE OTHER CORRESPONDENTS FROM SWEDEN,
U.S. AND FRG RESPECTIVELY.

2. MOST INTERESTING STATEMENT BY MEDEVEDEV, WHO
ANSWERED ALL QUESTIONS PUT TO HIM FRANKLY AND FREELY,
WAS THAT THERE WAS CRITICISM BY SUSLOV AT
DECEMBER 18 PLENUM REGARDING BREZHNEV'S SIGNING OF
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VLADIVOSTOK AGREEMENT. SUSLOV, ACCORDING TO MEDVEDEV,

REPORTEDLY DID NOT CRITICIZE VLADIVOSTOK AGREEMENT ITSELF BUT RATHER FACT THAT BREZHNEV ACCEDED TO IT WITHOUT PRIOR POLITBURO APPROVAL. IN ESSENCE POLITBURO WAS BEING ASKED TO RATIFY FAIT ACCOMPLI, SUSLOV ALLEGEDLY SAID. HE WAS ALSO SUPPORTED IN THIS VIEW ACCORDING TO MEDVEDEV, BY GRISHIN.

3. MEDVEDEV SAID THAT MANY RUMORS WERE CIRCULATING IN MOSCOW CONCERNING THE STATE OF BREZHNEV'S HEALTH AND THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION AS TO HOW LONG HE COULD REMAIN IN COMMAND. BREZHNEV, HE SAID, IS EXPECTED TO MOVE UPSTAIRS INTO A MORE HONORIFIC POSITION AT THE NEXT CPSU CC PLENUM WHICH MEDVEDEV PREDICTED WOULD TAKE PLACE IN APRIL. MEDVEDEV ALSO SAID THAT PLENUM WOULD CALL FOR 25TH PARTY CONGRESS TO TAKE PLACE THIS AUTUMN AND NOT NEXT SPRING AS EXPECTED. HE SAID IT TAKES SIX MONTHS FOR PREPARATIONS FOR A PARTY CONGRESS AND THAT THE UNCERTAIN STATE OF BREZHNEV'S HEALTH WOULD BE THE REAL REASON FOR MOVING THE DATE OF THE PLENUM FORWARD.

4. WHEN ASKED BY GERMAN CORRESPONDENT WHETHER ADVERSE PUBLICITY IN THE WEST REGARDING SHELEPIN'S RECENT VISIT TO THE FRG AND HIS UPCOMING VISIT TO THE UK WOULD HURT HIS CHANCES TO SUCCEED BREZHNEV, MEDVEDEV REPLIED THAT IT WOULD NOT ONLY HURT SHELEPIN BUT THAT IT WOULD HURT ANDROPOV AS WELL. SHELEPIN, POINTED OUT, WAS HEAD OF KGB DURING ONE OF ITS MOST LIBERAL PERIODS AND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR CLEANING UP THAT ORGANIZATION AND GETTING RID OF SOME OF ITS MOST DISREPUTABLE PEOPLE. IT WAS THEREFORE UNFAIR TO BLAME SHELEPIN, WHO HAD NO CONNECTION WITH KGB BEFORE HE WAS NAMED TO HEAD IT, FOR KGB MISDEEDS PRIOR TO HIS TENURE.

5. REGARDING ULTIMATE SUCCESSION TO BREZHNEV, MEDVEDEV PUT FORTH THE INTERESTING THEORY THAT SOVIET LEADERS ARE ALWAYS SUCCEEDED BY A TROIKE OF SUBORDINATES WHEN THEY DEPART FROM THE SCENE AND THAT IT IS ONLY AFTER SEVERAL YEARS'S STRUGGLE THAT ONE OF THE TROIKA EMERGES AS THE SUPREME LEADER. THERE HAS TO BE AN ODD CONFIDENTIAL

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NUMBER TO AVOID TIE VOTES AND FIVE ARE TOO MANY AND ONE IS TOO FEW, SAID MEDVEDEV. LENIN, HE SAID IN THIS REGARD, WAS SUCCEEDED BY ZINOVIEV, KAMENEV AND STALIN; STALIN BY MOLOTOV, MALENKOV AND BERIA WITH KHRUSHCHEV THEN REPLACING BERIA; AND KHRUSHCHEV BY BREZHNEV, SUSLOV AND SHELEPIN. HE ASSUMED THAT BREZHNEV WOULD ALSO BE SUCCEEDED BY A THREE-MAN COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP OF PARTY SECRETARIES AND

THAT THE ULTIMATE LEADER WOULD ONLY EMERGE AFTER
CONSIDERABLE STRUGGLE.

6. MEDVEDEV CONFIRMED PRESS REPORTS THAT THE FIRST
ISSUE OF HIS NEW DISSIDENT MAGAZINE HAD BEEN
SENT ABROAD FOR PUBLICATON. HE SAID THAT IT
WOULD SOON BE PUBLISHED IN BOTH RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH
EDITIONS. THE SECOND ISSUE WAS ALSO READY AND THE THIRD
WOULD BE FINISHED WITHIN SEVERAL WEEKS. THUS FAR, HE
SAID, THE AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT RAISED THE MATTER WITH
HIM AT ALL. HE SAID PUTTING OUT A PUBLICATION WAS
AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF WORK AND HE DID NOT KNOW HOW LONG
HE COULD CONTINUE WITH IT. NEVERTHELESS, HE FELT IT
WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THERE ARE THOSE
WHO DISAGREE WITH THE REGIME WHO ARE NEITHER RELIGIOUS
NOR ROYALISTS AND WHO FAVOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM. IN
THIS REGARD, HE CRITICIZED THE MAGAZINE "KONTINENT,"
PUT OUT BY THE EXILE MAKSIMOV WHICH HAS THE SUPPORT OF
SOLZHENITSYN, FOR ITS RELIGIOUS OVERTONES AS WELL AS
FOR OPENLY SUPPORTING THE FORMER FASCIST REGIME IN
GREECE AND THE CURRENT "UNSAVORY GOVERNMENT OF CHILE."

7. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST WE HAVE HEARD ON ANY
RECENT INTRA-PARTY CRITICISM OF BREZHNEV'S WORKING
STYLE AND UNTIL WE RECEIVE CONFIRMATION FROM OTHER
SOURCES WE TEND TO BE SKEPTICAL. WE HAVE ALSO
HAD NO OTHER RELIABLE INDICATION THAT 25TH PARTY
CONGRESS WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE AUTUMN AND, GIVEN
UPCOMING EVENTS THIS YEAR, WOULD TEND TO DOUBT THIS
AS WELL. ON THE OTHER HAND, BELIEVE THAT
MEDVEDEV'S STATEMENTS ARE VERY INDICATIVE OF
THE KIND OF POLITICAL RUMORS -- TRIGGERED BY
BREZHNEV'S ILL HEALTH -- WHICH ARE NOW CIRCULATING
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AMONG SOVIET INTELLIGENTSIA IN MOSCOW.
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